

**FRANCIS J. BRADY
14 THRONEBROOK ROAD
WEST GRANBY, CONNECTICUT 06090**

February 22, 2021

VIA EMAIL vatestimony@cga.ct.gov

Veterans' Affairs Committee

RE: S.B. No. 918

Dear Co-Chairs Cabrera and Boyd:

I write in opposition to Section 1(a) (2) Paragraph (C) of S.B. 918, which would expand the definition of "veteran" to include:

“(C) [Any person]with an administrative decision from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs stating that the veteran’s service is honorable or honorable for said department’s purposes;”

This expanded definition has not been adopted by the United States military for federal purposes or, most probably, by any other State for state purposes (the latter point is subject to confirmation/correction by a states-wide survey).

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is charged with providing “integrated life-long health care services to eligible military veterans.” Most recently, the VA expanded health care benefits for certain former service members whom it deemed appropriate within the scope of its health care mission. That expansion was for the limited focus of “honorable for VA purposes.” The proposed legislation would effectively enlarge that expansion of the term “veteran” for all purposes. In doing so, it would distort the definition of “veteran” as contemplated by the United States military.

The United States military designates a veteran's status (as "honorable" or otherwise) in its issuance of the Form DD-214 upon the service member's discharge. That designation has been the governing standard. Moreover, to the extent that a less than honorable designation was inappropriately assigned, the military has implemented a discharge upgrade protocol to correct any such error. The pursuit of such protocol is the proper avenue to secure such an upgrade --- not through the imputation from a limited VA designation expressly intended for "VA purposes."

In essence, the proposed expanded definition contemplated by subsection (C) should be rejected. However, if further consideration is to be afforded that proposal, it is respectfully submitted that the Committee would be well advised to conduct an analysis which would include, among other issues:

1. The limited purpose of the VA's expansion and its experience to date in its application;
2. The implementation of the military's discharge upgrade protocol and its corresponding experience;
3. How many other States, if any, have expanded their definition of "veteran" to parallel that of the VA for all purposes.

To put my comments in perspective, I am not a veteran. By way of background, however, I practiced law with the Hartford firm of Murtha Cullina LLP for some 41 years before retiring at the end of 2015; served as President of the Connecticut Bar Association from 2009-2010; am an authorized veteran's representative certified by the VA; and have been representing veterans on a pro bono basis for the past 10 years. I have the highest regard for veterans who have served our country and who have earned the distinction of "honorable."

Thank you for your consideration of my views.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Francis J. Brady